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THE MEXICAN PRESIDENTAL ELECTION

NOVEMBER 17TH, 1929

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This leaflet is addressed to the American people in the hope that the information it contains will aid in explaining the problems Mexico has had to face, thus winning a more sympathetic understanding for her people.

Kindly do not destroy it. When you have no further use for it, pass it on to your friends.

"There is no alleviotion for the evils of mankind except veracity of thought ond action."—Huxley.

Non-Partisan Mexican Election Committee
(Endorsing Senor Vasconcelos)
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The best sources available have been used in the compilation of the information contained here and every effort has been made to insure accuracy. Controversial matters, as well as copies of this leaflet, have been submitted to both political parties.

THE CANDIDATES.

Pascual Ortiz-Rubio (Administration), past middle age, calm and collected, of good family, engineer and general, author of books of memoirs and a history of Michoacan, his native state, has served the cause of the Revolution, was ambassador to Brazil.

Jose Vasconcelos of modest family, very active and tenacious, a "live wire," lawyer and educator, author of numerous articles and of several books, including one in collaboration with Prof. Rippy and Mr. Guy Stephens, has served the cause of the Revolution, named Master of Youth by the students of Latin-America, as Minister of Education in Obregon's cabinet he established numerous libraries and schools, published the classics of the world and developed a body of missionary teachers to travel among the Indians giving them a rudimentary education and teaching them basket weaving, etc., has lectured at the Universities of Chicago and Leland Stanford.

Suffrage. Manhood suffrage without property or literacy tests is open to properly enrolled males over twenty-one if single or over eighteen if married. The Presidential election is direct. Every qualified voter is given ballots, each with the badge of the several parties, one of which is marked with a cross and deposited, the others being destroyed.

The Parties. Two major parties are engaged in this contest: The National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario), organized by President Calles, who resigned as chairman shortly after he left office, and the National Non-Reelection Party, (Partido Nacional Anti-Reeleccionista), which is supposed to trace its orthodox origin to the beginning of the Revolution, when the principle of non-reelection was first advocated as a reaction aganist Diaz's continued rule.

A third party, the Communist, headed by General Triana, has doubtless little importance.

The first, the Administration Party, is composed mostly of political elements and well-to-do people of the new regime. The second, the Opposition, is made up mostly of people of modest means, students, professionals, intellectuals and in general non-political elements.

THE CONVENTIONS.

The Administration Party—at Queretaro, last days of February and beginning of March, 1929. The Opposition charged many irregularities: special rates to the convention offered by the bankrupt National Railways, government employes assigned to duty at the convention; schools of Queretaro closed to accommodate the delegates. Sr. Aaron Saenz, candidate for nomination of the same party was dissatisfied with the convention and withdrew his delegates. Sr. Gurria Trujillo, of the same party, charged: a number of Saenz delegates had been bribed to vote for Ortiz-Rubio; twenty-seven Saenz delegates who refused to be bribed were supplanted by secret service men, and seventeen others, by "wretches" recruited in Mexico City; one delegate from Sonora actually came from Jalisco. It was this convention which furnished a pretext for the Escovar revolution of March.

The Opposition—In Mexico City the first week of July, 1929, at the Fronton Nacional (Handball court) at the cost of 360 pesos, ($180). The delegates paid for all their expenses. The meetings seemed very business-like, no bickerings or irregularities being reported by the press. The defeated candidate for nomination, Dr. Vaquez Gomez, shook hands with the successful candidate, Vasconcelos, who was nominated by acclamation and covered with flowers.

ORTIZ-RUBIO'S CANDIDACY UNCONSTITUTIONAL?

The legality of Ortiz-Rubio's candidacy has been challenged on the ground that he has not resided in Mexican territory the entire year next prior to the election as provided by Article 82, sec. III, of the Constitution in force. This contention has been met, not decided by the Courts, with the argument that, although Ortiz-Rubio arrived in Mexico about two months after the period had begun to run, the fact that he was ambassador to Brazil and as such entitled to the right of exterritoriality, had the effect of making his residence abroad tantamount to residence in Mexican territory.

POLITICAL CORRUPTION.

To understand the situation properly it should be realized that a very irresponsible, ignorant crowd has come into power, partly as the result of civil war, partly through pressure due to economic depression. The machine elects its candidates, the people having little to say or do. From the mass of evidence, which seems conclusive, the following may be cited: the Kellogg declaration of June 12th, 1925, accusing the Mexican government of disregard for international obligations; the intrigues of the Mexican government in Central America to stir feeling against the United States; its communistic activities in Latin-America as stated by Secretary Kellogg on January 12th, 1927; the deadlock over the oil controversy which prompted President Coolidge to declare there was nothing to arbitrate, a view apparently shared by Professor Hyde of Columbia in his article published in the New York Times, Jan. 30, 1927; the appalling number of unprosecuted political murders as stated by Marcosson in his series of articles in the Saturday Evening Post; General Calles statements on the occasion of his renouncing the presidency that the country should pass from a government of personal rule to one of institutions and his advice to Congress to allow even the 'clerical reactionaries' to have representation in Congress, implying that, although elected, they had been barred from Congress; his remarks in the course of his farewell to the Mexican people:

"The people resent the fact that many members of state, municipal and even the federal legislature were not impartially elected. This is the field in which the Revolution has failed and constitutes the principal error to be corrected."

PLATFORMS AND ISSUES.

In general the National Revolutionary (Administration) Party stands for a continuation of the Calles policies, while the National Non-Reelection (Opposition) Party stands for certains reforms.

Army. No problem apparently exists for the Administration Party.

The Opposition realizes an actual situation, namely, that the army has been hitherto an instrument of oppression. The maintenance of the military establishment becomes burdensome while a reduction in the personnel might bring on revolt. It advocates no reduction in the army, employing the army in useful works, such as developing new lands, conquering the environment, etc.

Labor. The Administration Party stands for a continuation of the labor policy of the Revolution and workmen's compensation.

The Opposition advocates protection of labor and workmen's compensation also, and in addition, labor banks, the unification of labor legislation and freeing the labor unions and boards of arbitratoin and conciliation of political influence and corruption, reforms which are very much needed.

Government. The Administration Party pledges itself to uphold the constitution in force and stands against woman suffrage and for effectiveness of suffrage and respect for the vote of the majority.

The Opposition advocates woman suffrage; the executive's responsibility through limitation of his tenure to one term and the recall to prevent arbitrary acts; reestablishment of old "residencia" (accounting) action to compel the president to account at the end of his term; election of judges on the ground that the executive and legislative powers are too corrupt to appoint good men—reforms which, if unpractical, envisages at least actual conditions.

Education. The Administration advocates nationalistic education; using Indian civilization as the source of national culture; encouraging private schools.

The Opposition. Vasconcelos, an educator, looks at education in its relation to that of the United States with which country Mexico must compete and stands for an intensive educational campaign. He promises relief from the anti-religious laws (Constitution, Arts. 3 and 27; Decree of July 14th, 1926) which make private primary education non-religious and deny religious corporations the right to teach, thus creating a very difficult situation for private schools which, before being closed, were mostly conducted by the Church.

International Affairs. Both parties advocate respect for international obligations; international amity and rapproachment with Latin America.

Economics and Finance. In the civil war since 1910 there has been great destruction of property and capital, thus reducing sources of revenue. The foreign debt is in arrears; the railways are bankrupt; millions of dollars are due for international claims; the oil policy of the Obregon and Calles governments has driven producers to other fields freer from obstacles, where there are no export taxes; the pending labor legislation has further reduced oil production, an important source of revenue, to nearly 20% of the 1922 output; the agrarian policy has added a great burden also. Taxes have accordingly multiplied and graft seems widespread.

The Administration stands for honesty and efficiency; simplification of federal and state taxation; road building; technical study of the railway system; conservation of natural resources.

The Opposition realizes that "the country is the poorest on the continent," that some 3,000,000 Mexicans have migrated to the United States, that industries, natural resources and even the land is passing into the hands of foreigners who have the added protection of international law, that the citizens lack, against communistic labor and agrarian laws and advocates; equitable adjustment of the railway debt; revision of rates; technical management free from politics and graft; simplification of taxes and elimination of graft; gradual nationalization, without confiscation, of natural resources and exploitation by government controlled private enterprises as in Argentina.

The recent plan of the present government to nationalize the insurance business is pertinent in this connection. Possibly it is a sign of the times.

Agrarian Problem. The mountainous nature of Mexico, the deserts, the overcrowding of the population on the central plateau due to its mild, healthy climate as compared to the tropics, the insufficient rainfall of the tableland, the lack of surface water, partly due to the mountainous relief, have had the effect of limiting the proportion of arable land and making our agriculture dependent on large irrigation works. Throughout the course of history, Mexico has been a land of famine.

Hence the problem seems to be generally lack of arable land rather than monopolization by the few.

Actually the agrarian policy has worked as follows: the land is taken from the owners who are compensated with bonds at face value, actually quoted at 12% to 30% of par. The Indians are not given implements, nor are they organized or taught scientific farming. Irrigation works go to ruin, production decreases on account of the lack of organization, shiftlessness and low standards of the Indians.

According to G. B. Sherwell, speaking at the Williamstown Institute, the present agrarian policy seriously affects Mexico's ability to pay.

The Administration Party advocates distribution of land 'among those who work it' and 'destruction of the antiquated system of large holdings'; irrigation and development of new lands to be offered on easy terms; farm credit for small landholders; increased production; internal and foreign colonization; repatriation of refugees; difusion of scientific agricultural methods.

The Opposition stands for payment to the state by all who use the land; confirmation of grants already made; just distribution of land without graft through creation of commons or parcellings if more suitable, without detriment to production; organization of farmers for purchase and use of machinery, marketing, etc.; easy credit in small amounts for farmers, not politicians; diffusion of scientific farming; issue of agrarian bonds on a sound basis with a stable value, "not twelve centavos on the peso."

RELIGIOUS PROBLEM.

The colonial Church was very powerful and influential, playing the role of educator, explorer, settler, farm banker and even civil government as, outstripping the State, she pushed into the wilderness. The leaders of the War of Independence, mostly priests, committed themselves to uphold the Catholic Church as the sole religion, but this principle soon came into conflict with liberal ideas.

In protest against the liberal constitution of 1857, the Conservatives resorted to arms and the Liberals countered by passing the Reform Laws, 1859, confiscating all Church property without compensation, as a means to break the power of the Conservatives, who, they thought, were aided by the Church.

The Conservatives now sought under Maximilian the only safeguard for their institutions, but the monarchy collapsed and the primitive mentality of the people combined the concept of the invading French army, the Conservatives and the Church into an idea of treason which became the object of bitter hatred.

The Conservative Party disappeared forever from the political arena and the Liberals, now masters of the country, used the schools, which they controlled, to discredit the Church as a means to justify their whole conduct.

The anti-religious provisions of the Constitution of 1917 doubtless were repealed by custom under our system of jurisprudence; while the Calles Law of June 14th, 1926, is probably unconstitutional. That the Church, at times, has been at fault is not denied. The question is not yet settled on the authority of Mr. Ernest Gruening and Professor Eyler Simpson speaking recently at the Williamstown Institute.

The Administration Party stands for the religious laws in force because 'conditions since the enactment of the Reform Laws (1859) have remained unchanged'. Vasconcelos in his speech of November 10th, 1928, at

Nogales, Sonora, admits that the Church has mixed in politics, but believes that Mexico has reached extremes that Russia never did and he advocates: separation of Church and State; freedom of worship; recognition of the right to teach; equality of all cults as in civilized countries.

THE CAMPAIGN.

With the exception of a few riots, no irregularities are charged against the Opposition, apparently.

Against the Administration Party, unfortunately, numerous irregularities and acts of violence, some of which seem to be well established, are charged, such as: the bankrupt railways placing special trains on credit at the disposal of the Party; government departments advertising in the party organ, which has no circulation; hiring peasants and public women to stage demonstrations; pressure on the press forcing Vasconcelos to discontinue his contributions to El Universal and boycott against it; jailing and fining of 60 Vasconcelistas in Torreon for wearing badges; killings of Vasconcelistas at Cuatepec, Torreon, Tampico, San Fernando Garden, Mexico City; seven attempts on Vasconcelos's life; charge by the Opposition, which has been denied, that Sr. Luis L. Leon, Secretary General of the Administration Party, hired twenty-five assassins to put Vasconcelos out of the way. It should not be concluded, of course, that the Party is officially responsible for these acts.

Throughout the campaign, it should be explained, President Portes Gil has maintained a commendable attitude of impartiality.

ORTIZ-RUBIO.

The position of an administration candidate is always difficult in Mexico, the masses seeing in him only a tool of the government foisted upon the people.

Whether because of this general attitude, because of the reaction of the people against some of the local machines, because of Ortiz-Rubio's want of combativeness, or again, because as Administration candidate he is forced into a rather defensive, negative attitude, possibly, too, because he is not an experienced speaker, his campaign speeches seem somewhat uninspired and uninteresting.

In some places, such as Tampico, he seems to be quite unpopular.

VASCONCELOS.

Whether as a reaction of the people against the government, or because of Vasconcelos's combativeness and able dialectics, the people, from all classes, seem to have responded favorably to him.

To judge from press reports and the testimony of eye witnesses, the receptions accorded to him have been very enthusiastic, the people hailing him as Master or Father while the women embrace his knees and everybody contributes to his campaign chest according to his ability.

His popularity may be judged by the fact that he has been able to fill large theatres, charging rather high admission for Mexico, 1 to 2.50 pesos ($0.50 to $1.25) with audiences who go to hear his political talks, excerpts of which are given:

. . . we are the poorest people in America . . . the least happy in the continent, not to say the most wretched."

"An everlasting orgy of barbarism is our history, illumined at long intervals by frequent radiances which are soon lost in the shadow. Again and again the whole fatherland has fallen undermined by her own cruelty."

"The first thing we must change is our outlook on life. Love alone understands—love alone corrects. He who is not moved by love will find that his very sense of justice turns into vengeance."

His campaign doubtless has great significance as an educational crusade to correct the propaganda of the public schools and to raise the moral tone.

"I can think of nothing comparable to the Vasconcelos campaign," says a society woman who followed Vasconcelos, "except the Gandhi movement in India."

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CAMPAIGN.

From a sociological point of view the campaign is very interesting as a milestone in the integration of a new social structure, as the transition from personal rule to institutional, civil government (Ortiz-Rubio, although a general, is rather a civilian); as marking the decline of political apathy and the growth of social action in contrast to the 'atomism' which has characterized our organization; as reflecting the tradition of the Spanish-American prophet-statesmen and the Ghandi movement, under whose influence Vasconcelos has come.

CIVIL WAR?

From all the information available, it would seem that Vasconcelos is by far the more popular of the candidates, even the junior government employes being in sympathy with him, apparently, but in Mexico, because of the ignorance and lack of political education of the masses, as well as because of our suffrage law, it has been hitherto possible for a candidate to get the most votes without ballots and the most ballots without votes. The Opposition, so far, has been unable to come into office except through a revolution. But for this mischievous tradition the election of Vasconcelos would doubtless be assured.

If he is officially defeated, will the people respect paper ballots which, they have strong evidence to believe, do not represent votes? The courts, of course, cannot be appealed to to decide the election. Shall the people then be denied the right to change their government by the only means in their power, all others failing?

The future of Mexico hangs on the balance of a fair election.

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